

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 26, 2004

The Honorable Jim Nussle
Chairman
Committee on the Budget
309 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Spratt
Ranking Member
Committee on the Budget
214 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Nussle and Ranking Member Spratt:

We are writing to express our opposition to any language in the fiscal year 2005 budget resolution that assumes revenue from drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge or open-ended reconciliation instructions to the Resources Committee that would facilitate opening the Arctic Refuge. For the past three budgets, you have chosen not to legislate on the Arctic Refuge in the context of trying to agree on a budget. We ask you to continue to follow that wise path.

As you know, the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is currently protected against additional oil and gas exploration or development. Nevertheless, the Bush Administration continues to send Congress a budget that authorizes an auction of oil and gas leases within the boundaries of the Refuge, specifically within the area that defines one of the most magnificent and rare unspoiled ecosystems in the world. This proposal would sacrifice the pristine nature of this existing wilderness for a limited supply of oil and an increase in federal receipts of a little more than a billion dollars.

Because of the unique nature of this natural treasure, Congress in 1980 prohibited oil and gas exploration or production on the coastal plain of the Refuge. The majority of Americans has consistently opposed repealing these protections. Because of this widespread opposition, we believe it would be imprudent to assume any new revenue from this source at this time.

The Budget Resolution was designed to ensure that important fiscal matters be debated and decided swiftly, so as to ensure the budgetary health of our government. It is simply not appropriate to attach such a major policy decision to the budget debate, therefore preventing members from publicly and thoroughly debating this issue. The future of the Arctic Refuge is not, by any stretch of the imagination, a matter that is fundamental to the budgetary health of this country. Rather, it is a major policy question that was eliminated from the final conference report of the Energy Security Act of 2003 last fall. Its budgetary impacts are merely incidental to the sweeping and precedent-setting impact of industrializing this pristine national treasure.

We recognize that you are confronted with a difficult task in crafting the fiscal year 2005 budget. Unfortunately, the Resources Committee has indicated that, if instructed in the budget resolution to reduce mandatory spending under its jurisdiction, the Committee would respond by passing legislation to open the Arctic Refuge to oil and gas development. This was made very clear in a letter to you from Resources Committee Chairman Richard Pombo on October 2, 2003. The effort to reduce wasteful spending should not be used to facilitate drilling in the Arctic Refuge.

We strongly urge you to reject any requests to assume revenue from drilling activity in the Arctic Refuge or reconciliation instructions that could facilitate drilling there. Drilling is prohibited under current law and widely opposed throughout America. If the law ever changes, there will be adequate time to incorporate new assumptions regarding federal revenue from this source in subsequent budgets.

Sincerely,

Edward J. Markey

Frank Lautenberg

Robert E. Cilders

Peter DeFazio

George Miller

Jane Evans

Orlando L. Watt

Maury H. Ackerman

Lynn Woolsey

John Latta

Nancy Pelosi

Robert Menendez

Richard E. Neal

Rick Bonior

Michael R. McNulty

Bob Latta

Jim Moran

Barney Frank

Edgar L. Engel

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Frank Russell

Robert J. Matsui

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Cathryn B. Maloney

Shel Brown

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Chi V. Gutierrez

Wendy Lindberg
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Janet Ham

Patrick F. Kennedy

Louise M. Slaughter

Steve Israel

Joe Hoefel

Paul D. Ryan
John Smith

Greg Andler

Tim Wirth
Alto Starb

Anna Eshoo
Rush Holt

Jim Langevin

[Signature]

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Karen McCarthy

Ron Kind

Diana DeGette

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Blair Moore

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Barb Shuman

Mark Udall

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Bob Filner

Bart Gordon

Chaka Fattah

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Norman D. Payne

Tom Lantos

Hailu Pri.

King Rj

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Edward Markey
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